

Published: 10.26.2005

Part of old fort to be rebuilt Downtown

By Andrea Kelly

ARIZONA DAILY STAR

The historic fort that once protected Tucson from Apache raids will be reconstructed, in part, to commemorate its role in Tucson's past and solidify it as a part of the city's future.

A part of El Presidio de Tucson, a Spanish fort built in the late 18th century, will be rebuilt to provide a museum of the area's history, as the Rio Nuevo Downtown revitalization continues.

Groundbreaking on the new- old fort is expected this December, said Marty McCune, city historic preservation officer.

"The Presidio was really the walled fortress that protected the community that was Tucson in late 1700s and early 1800s," McCune said. "It's the reason we have a city here today."

The entire fort can't be rebuilt because it encompassed much of what is now Downtown, she said. The 11-acre fort stretched from North Church Avenue to North Main Avenue between West Washington Street and West Alameda Street.

The reconstruction will be on Washington from Church to North Court Avenue.

"That was a part of the fort that was recovered and wasn't covered by existing buildings today," said Greg Shelko, Rio Nuevo director.

The rebuilding includes a 20-foot tower used to protect against attacks, McCune said.

Remnants of the original Presidio wall have been found in the courtyard of the Pima County Superior Courthouse and in the west lawn of City Hall, McCune said. The new adobe wall of the building will not sit directly on top of the old, but will be slightly offset so the original is still visible. Artifacts from the archeological digs around El Presidio's original walls will be displayed at the new fort.

- *Contact reporter Andrea Kelly at 307-0773 or akelly@azstarnet.com.*